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OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
DIVINE MISSION
AND
ADMINISTRATION
OF
M O S E S.

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[Price One Shilling and Six-Pence,]

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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

ADMINISTRATION



M. O. S.

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OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
DIVINE MISSION
AND
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M O S E S.

Upon the Plan of a PAMPHLET, intituled,
OBSERVATIONS on the CONVERSION
and APOSTLESHIP of St. PAUL.

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LONDON:
Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in *Pall-Mall.*
M.DCC.LXII.

OBSEKVATIONS

ΣΗΤ ΖΟ.





OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
Divine Mission *and* Administration
OF
M O S E S.

THE arguments, which the learned
author of the justly admired *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of Saint Paul* has used, in order to establish the truth and divine authority of the Christian Religion, from that single fact, suggested to me, at the first reading, how apposite the same arguments are, to demonstrate, in as compendious a way, the truth and divine authority of the *Jewish* Religion, from the similar evidence, we have, of the Mission and Administration of *Moses*. I wished the more
B eagerly

eagerly to pursue this thought, since the necessary connection between the *Jewish* system and the Christian will make them the mutual support of each other; insomuch that any proof, which can be brought in favour of the *Jewish* Lawgiver's pretensions to a divine inspiration must be available to convince Unbelievers, that *Jesus Christ* also, "of whom he wrote," and for whose reception, in due time, he "prepared the way," was indeed, what he declared himself to be, "the Messiah of the *Jews*."

To confirm this evidence, which will equally affect the Revelation of the Old and New Testament, I shall apply the same reasoning, (and as often as I can, the same words) by which this author has defended the validity of *St. Paul's* Apostleship; and endeavour to shew, from the circumstances of the commission, granted to *Moses*, that his Legation was equally miraculous, his relation of facts equally authentic; and consequently, the Religion, which he founded, equally divine. This, I should hope, added to his defence of Christianity, will disarm Infidelity of every dangerous weapon; and leave us with-

and Administration of MOSES.

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out one objection against the grounds of our faith, or against the characters of those, who were the first propagators of it.

In the 3d chapter of *Exodus*, written by *Moses* himself, he gives this account of what we may well call his Apostleship and Mission. Verse 1. "Now *Moses* kept the flock of "*Jethro* his father-in-law, the priest of *Midian*: and he led the flock to the back-side of "the desert, and came to the mountain of "God, even to *Horeb*. 2. And the Angel of "the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of "fire, out of the midst of the bush: and he "looked, and behold, the bush burned with "fire, and the bush was not consumed. "3. And *Moses* said, I will now turn aside, "and see this great sight, why the bush is not "burnt? 4. And when the Lord saw that "he turned aside to see, God called unto him "out of the midst of the bush, and said, "*Moses, Moses*. And he said, here am I. "5. And he said, draw not nigh hither: put "off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the "place, whereon thou standest, is holy "ground. 6. Moreover he said, I am the "God of thy father, the God of *Abraham*, the

“ God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*. And
“ *Moses* hid his face; for he was afraid to
“ look upon God. 7. And the Lord said, I
“ have surely seen the affliction of my people,
“ which are in *Egypt*, and have heard their
“ cry, by reason of their task-masters: for I
“ know their sorrows. 8. And I am come
“ down to deliver them out of the hand of
“ the *Egyptians*, and to bring them up out of
“ that land, unto a good land and a large,
“ unto a land flowing with milk and honey:
“ 9. Now therefore behold, the cry of the
“ children of *Israel* is come unto me; and I
“ have seen the oppression, wherewith the
“ *Egyptians* oppress them. 10. Come now
“ therefore, and I will send thee unto *Pha-*
“ *raob*, that thou mayest bring forth my peo-
“ ple, the children of *Israel*, out of *Egypt*.
“ 11. And *Moses* said unto God, who am I,
“ that I should go unto *Pharaob*, and that I
“ should bring forth the children of *Israel* out
“ of *Egypt*? 12. And he said, certainly I
“ will be with thee; and this shall be a token
“ unto thee, that I have sent thee. When
“ thou hast brought forth the people out of
“ *Egypt*, ye shall serve God upon this moun-
“ tain. 13. And *Moses* said unto God, Be-
“ hold,

“ hold, when I come unto the children of
 “ *Israel*, and shall say unto them, the God of
 “ your fathers hath sent me unto you; and
 “ they shall say to me, what is his name?
 “ what shall I say unto them? 14. And God
 “ said unto *Moses*, I AM THAT I AM.
 “ And he said, thus shalt thou say unto
 “ the children of *Israel*, I AM hath sent
 “ me unto you. Chap. iv. 1. And *Moses* an-
 “ swered, and said, But behold, they will not
 “ believe me, nor hearken unto my voice :
 “ for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared
 “ unto thee. 2. And the Lord said unto him,
 “ What is that in thine hand? And he said, a
 “ rod. 3. And he said, cast it on the ground :
 “ and he cast it on the ground, and it became
 “ a serpent. And *Moses* fled from before it.
 “ 4. And the Lord said unto *Moses*, put forth
 “ thine hand, and take it by the tail: and he
 “ put forth his hand and caught it, and it be-
 “ came a rod in his hand. 5. That they may
 “ believe; that the Lord God of their fathers,
 “ the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, and
 “ the God of *Jacob*, hath appeared unto thee.
 “ 6. And the Lord said furthermore unto
 “ him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom;
 “ and he put his hand into his bosom; and

“ when he took it out, behold, his hand was
“ leprous as snow. 7. And he said, put thine
“ hand into thy bosom again : and he put his
“ hand into his bosom again, and plucked it
“ out of his bosom, and behold, it was turned
“ again as his other flesh. 8. And it shall
“ come to pass, if they will not believe thee,
“ neither hearken to the voice of the first
“ sign, that they will believe the voice of the
“ latter sign. 9. And it shall come to pass,
“ if they will not believe also these two signs,
“ neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou
“ shalt take of the water of the river, and
“ pour it upon the dry land : and the water
“ which thou takest out of the river, shall
“ become blood upon the dry land. 10. And
“ Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I
“ am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor
“ since thou hast spoken unto thy servant ;
“ but I am slow of speech, and of a slow
“ tongue. 11. And the Lord said unto him,
“ Who hath made man’s mouth ? or who
“ maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or
“ the blind ? have not I the Lord ? 12. Now
“ therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth,
“ and teach thee, what thou shalt say. 13.
“ And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray
“ thee,

“ thee, by the hand of him, whom thou wilt
“ send. 14. And the anger of the Lord was
“ kindled against *Moses*, and he said, is not
“ *Aaron* the *Levite* thy brother? I know that
“ he can speak well. 15. And thou shalt
“ speak unto him, and put words in his
“ mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and
“ with his mouth, and will teach you what
“ ye shall do. 17. And thou shalt take this
“ rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do
“ signs. 29. And *Moses* and *Aaron* went,
“ and gathered together all the elders of the
“ children of *Israel*. 30. And *Aaron* spake
“ all the words, which the Lord had spoken
“ unto *Moses*; and did the signs in the sight
“ of the people. 31. And the people be-
“ lieved.”—

This is the commission of *Moses*: and every reader will immediately perceive, what an exact resemblance it bears to the Apostleship of *St. Paul*. I will not say, that it was intended to be a type of That; but if it had, no antitype can well answer to its original in more corresponding circumstances, than this does. When *Moses* was called, the Angel appeared in a flame of fire, supernatural both

in its kind and effects. When *St. Paul* was called, the angel of the New Covenant spoke to him out of the midst of a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun: miraculously terrible; but, like the other, altogether harmless. The glorious appearance, made to *Moses*, was undoubtedly the divine *Schechinah*, or Glory of the Lord, which was always attended, under the Law, by a company of Angels; and with the invisible presence of the great *Jehovah* himself. This heavenly retinue, the visible ensigns of the divine Majesty, and by whose ministry every thing under the Law was transacted, never appeared but in the most splendid manner; or, as *Moses* sublimely represents it in another place, "as it were the body of heaven in his brightness:" *Exod.* xxiv. 10. signifying, that it was far above the glory of the sun in its meridian lustre, even as bright, as the sky itself would be, if it were filled with the shining brightness of the sun, enlarged in its dimensions to the whole compass of the hemisphere. Analogous to which, is the account, which *St. Paul* gives of his vision; that "at mid-day, he saw in the way a light "from heaven, above the brightness of the
" sun,

“sun, shining round about him, and them
 “which journeyed with him.” *Acts* xxvi. 13.
 Under the Gospel dispensation indeed, the use
 of the Schechinah was superseded by its substitute,
 which it had prefigured, the glorious presence of the Son,
 “in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily:”
 but it is more than probable, that after his ascension,
 when he had divested himself of the body of flesh,
 he chose to appear to St. Paul, who had been bred up a Jew,
 in the form, in which the Jews had been used to expect
 an heavenly vision, that is, in the luminous form
 of the Schechinah, though not accompanied by Angels,
 as That had been.

The embassy, upon which *Moses* was sent, was to deliver God’s people, the children of *Israel*, from the cruel bondage of the *Egyptians*, “and to bring them up out of that land, unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey:” and to make them meet partakers of such a blessing, he was appointed to teach them the whole will of God concerning their future conduct; and to injoin their obedience to such Laws, as he should prescribe for the rule
 and

and measure of it.—Here the similitude, that was discovered before, opens itself into a perfect type: for such is the *Egyptian* bondage, and their deliverance from it, of our thralldom to the dominion of sin and Satan, and of our deliverance from it, by a due obedience to the precepts and duties of the Gospel, into “the glorious liberty of the “sons of God.” Accordingly *St. Paul’s* embassy runs in words suitable to such a purpose; “to open the eyes of the *Gentiles*, and “to turn them from darkness to light, and “from the power of Satan unto God; that “they may receive forgiveness of sins, and “inheritance among them, which are sanctified by faith:” which inheritance in the heavenly *Canaan* was shadowed out to them, under the Law, by the possession of the earthly *Canaan*: the one, the reward of *our* faith in *Christ*; the other, the reward of *their* subjection to the Law of *Moses*.

THE errand, upon which *Moses* was to be sent, seemed to him so difficult and important, that he tried, by several ways, to excuse himself from undertaking so arduous a task; “who am I, that I should go unto
“*Pharaoh*,

“ *Pharaoh*, and that I should bring forth the
“ children of *Israel* out of *Egypt* ?” But God
incourages him by the promise of his own
immediate assistance ; “ certainly, I will be
“ with thee.” And again, when *Moses* urges
the insufficiency of his faculties, and some im-
pediment in his speech, which made him an
improper agent in such a cause, as required
the utmost exertion of every intellectual and
organical power, “ I am slow of speech, and
“ of a slow tongue :” God removes the mo-
dest objection by assuring him of a ready
ability, equal to every obstacle, from his in-
finite wisdom, who was the author of human
nature, and could therefore supply every de-
fect, or improve every degree of perfection
in it.—*St. Paul* had the like diffident appre-
hensions of his being an improper ambassa-
dor in the service of Christ : and accord-
ingly, he demurs to such a proposal ; especially,
as all his hopes of succeeding in the attempt
were cut off by the notoriety of his former
opposition to the name and profession of
Christianity : “ Lord, they know that I im-
“ prisoned, and beat in every synagogue
“ them, that believed on thee : and compel-
“ led them to blaspheme ; and being exceed-
“ ingly

“ingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” But what saith the answer of God unto him? He peremptorily refuses, as in the foregoing case, to admit of any excuse: and only said unto him, “Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the *Gentiles*,” when *Ananias* had intelligence of this design of heaven, he raised the same objection against him, that the Apostle did for himself: but the Lord corrects him likewise in the same manner: “He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the *Gentiles*, and kings, and the people of *Israel* :” similar to what was said to *Moses*, after all the difficulties which he had raised, “See, I have made thee a god to *Pharaoh*; thou shalt speak all that I command thee.” *Exod. vii. 1, 2.*

BUT notwithstanding all these assurances, *Moses* could not yet believe, that the *Egyptians*, over whom it was promised that he should prevail, would ever be convinced of the validity of his credentials: so that in order to satisfy all his scruples on this point, God vouchsafed to give him the additional testimony of a double miracle, which could
not

not fail of working conviction both in himself and them; for when he put his hand into his bosom, it became leprous as snow; and when he repeated the action, at *God's* command, it was restored again to its natural state, which changes from one extreme to another were so sudden, that he could not doubt of the power of God in the effects, or, lest this should rest too much upon his own testimony alone, and therefore fail of gaining conviction upon others, God enabled him further to produce as great a miracle, as either of these, in the very sight of the *Egyptians*, which they should disbelieve at their peril; for he empowered him, (and this they would feel most sensibly,) to change the water of their river into blood, when they persisted obstinately in unbelief.—I need not say, that *St. Paul* was enabled to work miracles, as astonishingly great, as these: for your Lordship has sufficiently shewn, how much the credit and authority of his apostleship were heightened and established by such a divine power “shewing forth itself in him.”

At length, *Moses* consents to undertake the grand enterprize, belonging to the sacred

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tions, &c.
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cred character, when he could no longer withstand the pressing solicitations of Providence. He does not, in his account of it, dissemble the anger of God upon his trying thus to resist his decrees: he attests every thing, that makes either for, or against himself; and the authenticity of his relation “cannot be doubted, without overturning all” “rules, by which the authority and genuineness of any writings can be proved or confirmed.” It follows then, that either he was an artful cunning Impostor, who could contrive such a plausible story, which he knew to be intirely false, with an intent to deceive others; or, he was a crack-brained Enthusiast, who was easily wrought upon, by the force of a warm imagination, to deceive himself: or, he was an ignorant, weak brother, who might be imposed upon by the artifice of any well-laid plot: or, the miraculous powers, which attended his mission, did really happen, as he has related the whole; and consequently, his legation is divine, and the religion, he promulged, was from God.

To suppose, in the first case, that *Moses* was an artful, cunning Impostor, who could
con-

contrive such a plausible story, which he knew to be intirely false, with an intent to deceive, we must suppose likewise, that the means, he proposed to use, should be adequate to such an end; and that the end should answer to the pains it required. Now, the means must consist in persuading others into a confederacy with himself; for it was impossible, that he could accomplish it by himself alone: and the end must be some probable emolument arising to all parties, concerned in carrying on the scheme; for without that, who would knowingly run themselves headlong into dangers and difficulties of all kinds? If we would find confederates, we must look for them either in *Jethro's* family, whom *Moses* was then serving; or, among the *Israelites*, who were in bondage in *Egypt*; or, in the court of *Pharaoh*; or, in *Pharoah* himself. These are the only possible suppositions; and yet, if we examine them, there are the strongest reasons to believe, that none of them could be the real case.

It is not likely that *Moses* should find, or ever expect to find confederates for
such

such an undertaking, as he was entering upon, in *Jethro's* family : for *Jethro* had given him his daughter in marriage upon account of some advantages, arising to him from his services ; and is it probable, after this, that he should become an associate with him in a plot, that would deprive him of all those advantages at once, without any prospect of others in reversion ? Or, is it any thing more probable, that *Zipporah*, *Moses's* wife, should contrive a scheme with him, that would either force her husband from herself and her children, or herself from her father's house ; and perhaps, considering the hazards, that must attend the execution of it, rob them all of his assistance for ever ? But even if *Moses* could have persuaded them, that some mighty advantages were to accrue to him from his success in such an attempt ; yet it does not appear, what help they could give him, or what use he made of their help, in the prosecution of it. It is natural to suppose, that the whole family would be alarmed at his communicating a proposal to them, which carried with it many improbabilities of succeeding, and more possibilities of destruction,

tion, in its first appearance. Well might they remonstrate, (if he had ever acquainted them with his story) that as he had escaped from *Egypt*, not without the danger of losing his life, to return thither again, would expose him to every danger, which he feared before, or perhaps, to more certain vengeance to follow; since they, who sought his life before, would certainly become now the more enraged against him, from their having been disappointed in their first attempts. In *Midian* he might remain safe; but the *Egyptians* would never suffer a *Hebrew* murderer to spill the blood of an *Egyptian*, without avenging themselves of him, if they had an opportunity. Besides, they might urge, that his condition in life was too mean to hope for an easy access to the king of *Egypt*: his father-in-law could have no interest, that would facilitate his admittance to him: or if he had, he would scarcely have ventured to exert it, in behalf of a large number of slaves, who contributed by their labours not a little to the support of the king and his country: especially, as he himself was not an *Hebrew*; perhaps, not even

a Priest of the God of the *Hebrews* *; and therefore cannot be supposed to have their release so much at heart, as to wish for it, at the hazard of the loss of his son-in-law. Indeed, he could not decently refuse to comply with his request of going "to see whether his brethren were yet alive," for this perhaps he might do safely enough in a private manner: but he could never consent to his rushing into the presence of the King, upon such a strange errand; nor would *Moses*, who had fled for fear from the Country, and had concealed himself in *Midian*, through that fear, ever have had courage enough, all on a sudden, to think of it, unless he had been convinced within himself, though it would have been difficult to convince *Jethro*, that he had received a commission from heaven for that purpose. It was natural for him to think that the King would look upon any such ambassador as a mere madman; and

* This was matter of some dispute between two famous Rabbies: for *Kimchi* thinks that *Jethro* was originally an idolatrous priest; and did not become a convert to the worship of the true God, 'till he confesses, at his interview with *Moses* in the wilderness, *Exod. xviii. 11.* that "the Lord is greater than all Gods:" but *Aber* *Exra* concludes, from *Moses* having married his daughter, that he professed the true religion before.

and that if he might be inclined to be a little favourable towards him; yet he would, upon his persisting in his seemingly wild request, shut him up, (as Pope *Eugenius* served the famous enthusiast *Eon de l'Etoile*, in the twelfth century) for a fool or a madman. (v. *Du Pin's Eccles. Hist. Cent. 12. c. 6.*)

BUT supposing that *Jethro* could have been brought to consent, that *Moses* should undertake the rescue of his brethren, and that he should go to the king of *Egypt*, with the pretence of having had a vision from heaven: yet, if it had been only a plot of their own contriving, why should *Moses* take his wife, and his children with him, who must rather have been incumbrances to him, in such an enterprize? Or, how shall we account for that want of natural affection in *Jethro*, which must discover itself in the unnecessary sacrifice of his daughter, upon an occasion, that neither required her presence, nor her help. Men are generally the most confident of success, in the most visionary designs; but this, it should seem, will prove a special instance of distrust: for, as Dr. *Lightfoot* remarks, had *Moses* believed certainly

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God's promise, that "they should serve him "on this mountain," and that undoubtedly he and the people should come thither, he would never have taken wife and children with him : but (which shews he was put upon it) he feared, that this message would produce nothing but danger to himself, and perhaps bondage too, so that if he left wife and children behind him, it was odds he should never see them again : and for this his distrust the Lord meets him, and seeks to kill him. (See *Lightfoot's* works, vol. I. p. 703.

BUT the strongest presumption against the supposition, that *Moses* and *Jethro* were confederates in such a desperate undertaking, is, that if they had, they would undoubtedly have contrived to bring the *Israelites*, when once they had been released, into *Jethro's* own country, where a colony of slaves, inured to hard labour, might have been transplanted with great advantage ; whilst they would have defended their deliverers from any insult ; and the promoters of such an accession to the kingdom would not have failed of a suitable reward from the higher powers. But instead of this, *Moses* conducted

ducted the people, after they left *Egypt*, through a perilous wilderness, into a strange land; and *Jethro*, far from making any advantage of *Moses's* success, contents himself in his old station, without taking to himself the least merit of his counsel or advice, in planning their deliverance.

THE truth is, that *Moses* concealed the whole affair from *Jethro*, lest, through tenderness to his family, or the glaring improbability of the attempt, he should discourage him from it. Nothing less than another revelation from heaven could have convinced *Jethro*, that *Moses* had already received one for such a purpose; and therefore he puts the design of his visit into *Egypt* upon such a footing, as might best remove any obstacle from the very thoughts of *Jethro*.

BUT if *Moses* could not prevail upon *Jethro* to enter into such a confederacy with him; yet would not the *Israelites*, who were cruelly oppressed in the house of bondage, gladly become associates with him, in such an enterprize? This is a more plausible supposition than the other; but this too is clog-

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ged with difficulties, that will immediately shew the invalidity of it. For it is most probable, that *Moses* had not held the least communication with any of his countrymen for forty years past; indeed, it might not have been safe for him to let any one know where he was, lest treachery or accident should discover his retreat: though the intercourse of different nations, at that time, was neither easy nor common.

The plot then must have been laid between them at least forty years before it was put into execution. But, in the mean time, many of the first accomplices must be dead; or too impatient to wait so long in hopes of what they saw no growing probability of its ever coming to pass: and as their sons knew nothing of *Moses*, but upon report, they would never risque the resentment of a tyrant, to trust to the weak endeavours of a poor refugee murderer, who dared not so much, as to shew his face in the country. It was most likely, if they could hope ever to accomplish a release, that the *Israelites*, now increasing in number daily, should combine among themselves, and not trust the whole
manage-

management of it to one single person, who might be tempted to betray their design, in hopes of procuring his own pardon. But much less could they expect to have it accomplished by the method, that was taken by *Moses*. They knew how inexorable *Pharaoh* was to all their sufferings and complaints; and could they think, that he would lend a more favourable ear to their remonstrances or intreaties? especially, as they tended to ease them, for a time, from those burdens, which the king had rigorously imposed upon them, partly thro' jealousy, and partly, thro' cruelty, the two most restless passions of the human mind.

AND as the children of *Israel* could scarcely be brought to enter into such a confederacy with *Moses*; so neither could *Moses* himself be inclined to join with them in such an undertaking. For none but an *Hebrew* had been privy to his murder of the *Egyptian*; and though it was done for his sake alone, who was thereby delivered from the oppressor, yet he could not be so faithful to his deliverer, as to conceal the crime: who then, in his right senses, would have ven-

tured after that to trust himself defenceless to the mercy of a king, who sought his life, or to the fidelity of a people, who had already treacherously endangered it? A plot of this nature must take some time in forming, even where the parties can have immediate communication with each other, and can concert matters together without the least reserve: but *Moses* could scarcely know any of his brethren, after so long an absence; or if he did, could not confide in them.

INDEED, when he had some influence among the chief men of the country, he might have intimated to them the possibility of a deliverance by his hand, as the instrument in God's: but if he did, they then rejected the offer, as a visionary proposal: how then could he expect, that they would listen to it now, when all his former authority was vanished, and his circumstances, in every other respect, vastly inferior to what they were before? At that time too, the *Israelites* had not lost their regard for the religion of their fathers; but now, it was well nigh extinguished; and tho' the severities of their bondage

dage were continually increasing; yet the Idolatry of their task-masters prevailed more among them, than the worship of their own God. This would make any application from *Moses* still more ineffectual; especially, when his scheme was formed wholly upon the score of Religion; and in favour of that devotion, which they began to abhor.

BESIDES, if a number of captives were to be drawn into a confederacy by the promising hopes of an escape from bondage, their chief conductor or instigator must shew them how they may seize on a secret and sudden opportunity of effecting their design; for no company of deserters were ever known to apprize their general-officer of their intended desertion of his banner. They would never have consented, that *Pharaoh's* leave to let them go should be first asked; and much less would they have agreed together, that in case it was not freely granted, they should try to extort it from him. They had already smarted the more, lest they should grow rebellious by a relaxation of their labour; and therefore they would naturally dread the consequence of asking for a total exemption from it, for a time.

Indeed,

Indeed, it proved as they might well expect : for upon the first application to *Pharaoh*, his complaint lies against *Moses* and *Aaron*, “ Wherefore do ye lett the people from their “ works ?” his exactions accordingly became the more severe, “ Let there more work be “ laid upon the men, that they may labour “ therein ; and let them not regard vain “ words :” And the people murmured, (as it would naturally follow, where there was no confederacy,) against *Moses* and *Aaron* for their vain attempts, which they might foresee would provoke the tyranny of the king the more ; “ You have made our favour to be “ abhorred in the eyes of *Pharaoh*, and in “ the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in “ their hand to slay us.” Or, even if there had been a confederacy before, it can scarcely be imagined, that they would suffer *Moses* to persist in such a method of rescuing them, as would only exasperate the king, and aggravate every degree of cruelty : for that, they might be well assured, would be the consequence of every such fresh trial, as *Moses* was making.

BUT

BUT let us suppose, that the children of *Israel* could be prevailed upon to place so much confidence in *Moses*, as to hazard the displeasure of an imperious Tyrant, if not their lives, upon the slender abilities, and fruitless attempts of *Moses*: yet, since confederacies of all kinds ought to be kept private, and trusted to as few, as can well be, it is highly improbable, that they would suffer *Moses* to communicate a scheme, upon which their All depended, to his own brother *Aaron*, that he might be made another principal manager in conducting it: for besides that, upon the bare mention of his being a necessary accomplice, they would suspect the whole to be a family juggle, contrived between themselves, no reason can be conceived why the people should then want, or agree, to enter into such an engagement with *Moses*, who was so obnoxious an offender, and at a distance; when *Aaron* could as well have pleaded their cause by himself, and had lived more innocently, in the eyes of *Pharaoh*.

BUT here again another difficulty will start up before the *Israelites*, which would make them unwilling to rest their cause upon
Aaron's

Aaron's management. For they would naturally suspect, that it would be unsafe to trust him, who had a poor convicted brother, fled from justice, and therefore might contrive this political stratagem, and abuse their confidence in him, in order to establish interest enough, to deliver his brother, if he could, from the hand of justice : since the seasonable discovery of such a rebellious attempt, laid before the King, or his Ministers, might have recommended himself to the Royal bounty, and his brother, through that means, to the Royal mercy. These are natural suspicions; and such, as must for ever prevent an agreement of this sort from taking place.

The *Hebrews*, it must be confessed, were but a weak and superstitious people : the more easy, it may be thought, to be practised upon; and fit to be made the tools of any contrivance, that an artful, cunning Impostor might propose to them. But the more weak and superstitious they were, the more they were attached to the customs and idolatry of the *Egyptians* : and therefore even these qualities, which are usually serviceable to imposture, would hinder their compliance with
Moses's

Moses's proposal, which was, to separate them from that corruption and idolatry, to which they were become addicted. Weak and superstitious minds are found to be the most obstinate: so that if an Impostor would succeed in tampering with such confederates, his likeliest, and indeed only, method is, to build on their favourite opinions and prejudices; for the more absurd or extravagant these are, the more tenacious they will be of them. But instead of this, *Moses* set up in direct opposition to their freshest prejudices, which are generally the most prevalent. He professedly undertook to withdraw their hearts from a pleasing idolatry, which they had lately imbibed; and to substitute in its place many burdensome rites and ceremonies, some of which they had lately discarded. "This cannot be deemed Art, Policy, or Contrivance: it must be the plain mark of great stupidity, or great honesty: but stupidity would have failed in the forming of such a system; and therefore honesty alone, or the cause of Truth, must be the foundation of this attempt."

Well:

Well: but an Imposter might take some advantage of the prejudices or principles of those, who were in *Pharaoh's* court: and pick out some dexterous confederates there, to manage such an affair under him. This method had been the most likely, that could have been devised, if the scheme were, to bring so many *Israelites* into bondage to their Sovereign: but when the proposal was, to release them from it, such a confederacy will appear strangely preposterous. It will be difficult indeed to conceive, from which side the proposal should come first; whether from *Moses*, or from the Courtiers; or how it could well come from either. *Moses* could never think of making the first application; for he had utterly abandoned the court of *Pharaoh*; and since that, made himself obnoxious to the resentment of it. And was it probable, that he should chuse those for associates in a fraud, whom he had discarded, as unworthy of his friendship in plain dealing? It must be confessed, that he who engages in fraudulent practices, will look out for the assistance of men of fraudulent principles: but then, he must fall in with all their notions, both in Religion and Politics; otherwise,

wife, they will be as much afraid to trust him, as he must always be doubtful, how far he can trust them.

In the present instance, every circumstance is abhorrent to such an association. If they were faithful to their Master, and *Moses* might have no reason to believe the contrary, they would reject with the highest disdain every proposal, that could be made to them by a traitor and murderer; much more any one, that tended to rob their Master of so many useful hands, which brought great gain to their country by their daily labour. And in a religious light, the scheme would be as impracticable, as in a political one. They, like the rest of the *Egyptians*, were undoubtedly immersed in the many superstitious vanities, and the idolatrous worship of different animals, with which the whole land abounded: how then could they listen to a projector, who had no veneration for their highest modes of devotion; but would even sacrifice what they held it profaneness to hurt?

If you suppose these men to be the reverse of all this; treacherous to their Prince, and
indifferent

indifferent to their Religion, then the difficulties will be shifted to the other side; and *Moses* will be as backward, as they could be found before, to enter into any combination with such traitors. For he would naturally imagine, that no faith could be held with those, who had shewn no regard to the laws of their Country; and if neither protection on the King's part, nor gratitude on their's, could bind their allegiance, much less could a disinterested friendship only secure their integrity. Some hopes indeed might have been conceived of engaging their services, if *Moses* could have set before them the prospect of quickly mending their condition by a change of it: but all the promises he could make of that sort were distant, and in a distant, unknown country; a place, where he had settled no correspondence; and consequently, could not answer for either the emoluments, or the conveniences of it. Men, whose principles were unsettled before, are not to be fixed down to any scheme of confederacy, by such uncertain motives, as these; and much less men of steady tempers: they must see their advantage in it, before they can be tempted to hazard their lives and fortune; and when they

they are prevailed upon by the temptation, you will scarcely be able to make them steadfast in a pursuit, unless you can remove the suspicion of every difficulty, that may lye in the way to obstruct it. But *Moses* had provided no more against the obstacles of their journey, than for their recompence at the end of it: He could not so much as fix upon the rout, that might be the most pleasant or convenient for them: a long and perilous wilderness was the path, that was chalked out for them; and how many fatigues and distresses would accompany them through that, it was easy for them to guess.

ADD to all this, that not one of *Pharaoh's* court left it with the *Israelites*; and yet *Moses* could have no means of requiting them at home. Had it been discovered afterwards that any of his servants had assisted the *Israelites* in their escape, they must have fled for their lives, or there must have arisen great disturbances from it in the state; and not to be discovered, was next to impossible, considering what heart-burnings subsisted between them before they parted from each other. But we do not read of the least commo-

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tions of this kind: all the spite and fury is levelled, as might be expected, against the departing *Israelites*; and every *Egyptian* arm is stretched out in pursuing after the fugitives, who had raised their resentment by a succession of the most dismal plagues, inflicted for their sakes; which plagues would not have been so universal among the *Egyptian* families, if they had been the juggling effects of a confederate party.

THE last, but the most improbable supposition is, that *Pharaoh* and *Moses* must have been confederates together in carrying on this grand scheme of imposture. It may seem absurd, at first sight, to mention such a supposition; and yet, if any can conceive it possible that *Moses* was an Impostor, they must take the king of *Egypt* into a partnership with him in the cheat. For, excluding Truth and the power of God, no other reason will account for *Pharaoh's* suffering so many evils to befall his subjects and their country for so many months, when he might have prevented it. For if *Pharaoh* imagined that *Moses* had been an Impostor, and yet himself not an accomplice, He would quickly have

have put a stop to his proceedings, when he had him in his power, by imprisonment or death. Or, if he believed *Moses* to be sent by his God, and not a deceiver, the case would have been the same; for he would naturally despise the power of a God, whom he did not own. But admitting Truth and the power of God, and we may argue justly, that *Pharaoh*, in his forbearance, could not resist the ordinances of Him, who can turn the hearts of men, as he pleases. For the same power, which is said to have hardened his heart against the *Israelites*, softened it enough to listen to the several applications, which were made to him in their behalf. This and no other Hypothesis will make the behaviour of *Pharaoh* consistent.

BUT how shall we suppose, that *Moses* could apply to *Pharaoh*, in order to gain his assent to such a proposal, as he had to make? Could he urge him to compliance with his design of releasing the *Israelites* from their captivity by the hopes of any advantage, the flattery of any honour, or the prospect of any new friendship, that would be established by it? Did not all these motives, which are the

only ones, that can influence an accomplice in deceit, lye on the other side? As long as he kept the children of *Israel* in bondage, he was sure of all the advantage, that could arise from the labours of so many working hands: the honour of a Prince, as well as the stability of his government, consists in the number of his subjects, and dependents; so that he was sure of diminishing that, by the loss of those slaves, who were brought under his yoke: And as for any connection of alliance, which might be procured by sending such a colony into a foreign country, That must be too distant for any dependance upon it, and too insignificant, to intice the ambition of a self-sufficient potentate.

BUT it is too glaringly absurd to suppose, that any *Egyptian* would join in a confederacy, that brought perpetual destructions upon some part or other of his possessions and family. Had *Pharaob* been concerned in sending away the *Israelites*, he might have done it, without any hazard of a tumult upon that account: Or, had any of his subjects wished to accomplish such a design, they would rather have planned it among themselves,

selves, than trusted to the fidelity of an *Hebrew*: Or, had *Moses* contrived the scheme, which was not to be executed without associates, He took the most unlikely methods in the world to persuade any set of men to comply with the terms he proposed.

“ For this thing was no done in a corner:” He did not come, as it were, by stealth, to intice the *Israelites*, by fair speeches, or soothing promises, to withdraw privately from their services: but he was bold enough to throw himself into the King’s immediate presence; and acquaints him, without any reserve, with the commission he bore: This would make his story ‘ subject to the examination of those, who would be most strict in searching into the truth of it;’ and is a very remarkable proof of the integrity of the man, who with so fearless a confidence could apply to a king, in a matter, that so nearly concerned his interest. ‘ Let us consider what difficulties he had to encounter among the *Egyptians*, in the enterprize he undertook of going to them, and making himself the deliverer of the captive *Israelites*. As this undertaking was the distinguishing part of his

mission, that which, in the language of our Scriptures, he was particularly called to, or which, to speak like an Unbeliever, he chose and assigned to himself, it deserves a particular consideration.'

Observ.
P. 44.

Ibid.

' Now in this enterprize, *Moses* was to contend, first, with the Policy and Power of the Magistrates: 2dly, With the interest, credit, and craft of the Priests and Magicians: 3dly, With the prejudices and passions of both people, the *Egyptians* and the *Hebrews*.' The religion of every country is so closely interwoven with its civil constitution, that it will be thought an essential part of the Government to convert those, who live in subjection to it, to its own worship. Upon this account, though the *Egyptians* might tolerate the *Israelites* in their own modes of devotion, yet they would naturally endeavour to introduce, and indeed had actually introduced, among them a conformity to their established rites. When *Moses* therefore attempted to reclaim their minds from the worship of false Gods, who had but just been persuaded to renounce the service of the true; They, who had undertaken before to

pervert them, would certainly be provoked against him, who was trying to defeat all the pains they had taken for that purpose; and considering how many useful slaves the Government would be deprived of, by these means, 'such a step would, of course, fall under the immediate notice of the Magistrate, and the civil power would be every where armed with all its terrors against it.' *Moses* then might well expect, that 'the most severe persecutions must be the consequence of his attempt, or of any success in it.'

SECONDLY, This danger was rendered more certain by the opposition he was to expect from the interest, credit, and craft of the Priests and Magicians. How great an ascendancy they had gained over the people of *Israel* by their superstitions, and how much credit they had established with the State; by such means, is well known. *Moses* could not doubt, that all these men would exert their utmost abilities to put a stop to an attempt, which tended to undermine all their authority, by unsettling the minds of those, who had been influenced by it: so that whatever their cunning could do, to support their own

Idolatry, or suppress an attack upon it; whatever aid they could draw from the Magistrate; whatever zeal they could raise in the people, *Moses* was to contend with, unsupported by any human assistance.

WHEN the Magicians were called upon by *Pharaoh* to confront the pretensions of *Moses*, they would, no doubt, try all their best skill to frustrate the aims of one, who came to set up his own Art, in opposition to theirs: and at last, manifested the superiority of his miraculous power to the utter disgrace of their best-concerted Magic. A contest of this kind would be attended with the greater danger, as it struck directly at the root of all their power and gain; and would infallibly expose the practices, upon which both depended, but as useful cheats.

AND Thirdly, This he was to do in direct opposition to all the prejudices and passions of both people, the *Egyptians* and the *Hebrews*. Astrology was then the prevailing doctrine both with King and people: the administration of the true God of nature was excluded, and the planetary influences of the
works

works of nature were substituted in his room. This notion was admirably well calculated to become a popular one, as it would acquit those, who held it, from all obligation to any superior: The prejudices, arising from it, would be most easily conveyed to the mind; and when conveyed, they would make the deepest impressions there: so that whoever endeavoured to remove them, must encounter all the notions, by which they were occasioned, and to which they owe their strength. The *Israelites* had caught the infection from the *Egyptians*: they had got over their aversion to Idolatry; and it is notorious how apt men are, especially in matters of Religion, to run from one extreme to the contrary. What authority then could *Moses* flatter himself that his application, in behalf of his own religious worship, would carry along with it among a people, to whom he was at once the object of national hatred, and of national scorn?

THE worship of One God, was such, as shocked all their ingrafted religious principles: The *Egyptians* knew nothing of the God of nature; the *Israelites* had discarded the

the belief of him : the *Egyptians* paid divine adoration to those animals, which the *Israelites* had been used to hold unclean: the *Israelites* had been brought to fall down before such Gods, as they had been formerly taught to sacrifice to the creator of them. To this species of idolatry they were strongly attached, not by their prejudices alone, but by their passions ; and how then were all these to be overcome by a man, authorized by no commission ; opposed by those, who were the chief, and thought to be the wisest among them ; ‘ either quite single, or only attended by another, under the same disadvantages, and even of less consideration than himself ?’

‘ To succeed in such an undertaking, he must have called in some extraordinary aid, some stronger power than that of reason and argument.’ Accordingly we find, that *Moses* even declined the commission, ‘till he was convinced, that his credentials would be supported by the continual efficacy of the divine power. His rod was turned into a serpent, and that serpent resumed the former shape of a rod ; and this was further strengthened by the promise of his being empowered to turn
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the water of the river into blood, before he himself could be convinced, that he should gain belief to his story. ' If such a power really went with him, it would enable him to overcome all those difficulties, that obstructed his enterprize, but then *he was not an Impostor*: our enquiry therefore must be whether (supposing him to have been an Impostor) he could by *pretending to miracles* have overcome all those difficulties, and carried on his work with success.' Observ.
P. 57.

' Now to give miracles, falsely pretended to, any reputation, two circumstances are principally necessary, an *apt Disposition* in those, whom they are designed to impose upon, and a *powerful confederacy* to carry on, and abet the cheat.' But neither of these Ibid. assisted *Moses*. For what degree of prepossession could there be in the mind of *Pharaoh*, either in favour of him, or his request? Or rather what prepossessions could be stronger than those, which he undoubtedly had against both? All that he could possibly know of *Moses* was, that he had been bred up in the *Egyptian* court; and conceiving some prejudice against it, had deserted it; and
since

since that, had killed one of the King's subjects, without any provocation done to himself; and thro' fear of capital punishment, to which every murderer was obnoxious, had fled for refuge into some foreign country. Is there any thing in such a character as this, to incline *Pharaoh* to give any credit to a story, that he should invent, of his having seen a vision, and received a special command from Heaven, to petition him, in behalf of his own countrymen; and that, if he would not listen to the petition, He was enabled by the same Almighty power, which had appeared to him, to work such and such miracles? Would an imperious Tyrant, do we think, concur in this disadvantageous proposal, to the deceiving of himself? Was his imagination over-heated with any conceits of a miraculous power, belonging to an *Hebrew Refugee*, which could dispose him to think, that *Moses* worked such miracles, when he did not? Indeed, they produced nothing but plagues or destructions to him and his country; and therefore it is no wonder, that *Moses* should find no disposition, no aptness, no bias to aid his Imposture, if the Miracles, by which he supported it, had not been true.

NOR

NOR were the *Israelites*, after their release, more disposed to believe in the authority of *Moses*, than the *Egyptians* had been before it. Immediately after their departure from *Egypt*, when *Pharaoh* pursued them close, they shewed, that upon the first fair opportunity, they would have been ready to deliver up *Moses*, if they could but secure themselves: and in the wilderness, we hear of nothing but murmuring and complaints against their Leader; a perverse lingering after the *Egyptian* flesh-pots; and as soon as one appetite was gratified, a despondency of heart, lest they and their cattle should die by the unsatisfied cravings of another. Does this indicate an aptness of disposition to believe whatever *Moses* said or did? does it not rather add to the former proofs, that he met with prejudices, which nothing but Truth could overcome, and not with such, as would easily yield to falshood?

‘ ON the other hand, then let us examine, whether without the advantage of such an assistance, there was any confederacy strong enough to impose his false miracles’ upon *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians*, ‘ who were both

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unprepared and undispofed to receive them.'
 Observ. 'The contrary is apparent.' The Magicians
 p. 60. were looked upon by them as the only judges
 in these matters : and is it likely, that a combination should be formed with them, in behalf of his credit, who came in the name of a Master ; whom by the first principles of their art they were bound to disclaim ? Would they not rather be watchful to detect an Imposture, which, if it should appear to be true, would prove them to be liars ? If there were any combination subsisting, it must be among the Magicians themselves, in order to expose the frauds of *Moses*.

LET it also be considered, that this opposition was carried on against those, who could distinguish juggling tricks from miraculous powers. They had been long conversant in the magic art, and therefore would be less inclined to acknowledge, that what *Moses* did was by "the finger of God," than others who were more ignorant of, and consequently, less inquisitive into the extent of the powers of nature. Had *Moses* met with no such opposition, or had there been no disparity between his miracles, and those of the magicians,

magicians, *Pharaoh* might have ascribed both equally to enchantments, or to the planetary and elementary influences : but when he saw, that *Moses* could produce such plagues, and again relieve them from the plagues, which the magicians could neither imitate nor remove ; and that he could do thus much under any aspect of the stars, or at any moment assigned, which no Magicians, Sorcerers, or Soothsayers could pretend to do, this added continual disgrace to their defeat, and the highest glory to the true Prophet's conquest ; or, in the sarcastical language of the author of the book of *Wisdom*, (chap. xvii. 7, 8.) " As for the illusions of Art Magic, they were put down, and their vaunting in wisdom was reproved with disgrace. For they that promised to drive away terrors, and troubles from a sick soul, were sick themselves of fear worthy to be laughed at."

AFTER *Moses* had led the people of *Israel* into the wilderness, there are no greater signs of a confederacy, to carry on an Imposture, than there had been in *Egypt*. In every exigency, they were all ready to stone *Moses*, and his brother *Aaron*, as the principal authors

thors of all their misfortunes ; and it does not appear, that he had any other companion, who would espouse his cause. But was this a confederacy powerful enough to persuade so great a multitude, often exasperated as they were, that both their hunger and thirst were satisfied by a succession of miracles, if they really were not ? To no other cause surely can we ascribe every seasonable supply of this kind, in a barren and desolate wilderness, but to the power of God going along with, and aiding his ministry, because no other was equal to the effects.

THE promise of the land of *Canaan*, a distant, unknown country, was the only temptation, that influenced the hopes of the *Israelites*, or their submission to the laws of *Moses*, during their passage thro' the wilderness : but long before they came to the confines of this land, they were told, that they should never reach it ; but instead of this, they were threatened, upon a general defection, with a total excision, excepting two only of so many thousands : and yet, after this, even without the glimpse of advantage, or the least hopes of reward for what they under-

underwent, or were still to undergo, their combined perverseness was quickly checked and controuled, and every mutiny, which they raised with eager impetuosity, was appeased in good time: which, considering the number of delinquents, and the height of their commotions, can be ascribed to nothing else, than an inward conviction of the divine power and presence among them; together with a religious sense of the terrors of those judgments, which, in all revolts, miraculously seized upon the disobedient. (See *Jenkins's Reason and Certainty of the Christian Rel.* p. 2. chap. 6.)

MOSES complains of the people, in the bitterness of his heart, that they were almost ready to stone him: and whilst he was in *Egypt*, intending a friendly office to two of his brethren, who were striving together, instead of thanks, he received a rebuke from one of them; "who made thee a Prince and "a judge over us?" what inducement then, it remains to be inquired, could he have, after this, to shew favour, at his own utmost peril, to such a perverse set of people? 'It must be either some hope of advancing him-

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self by it, in his temporal interest or power; or the gratification of some of his passions, by the means, that such an Imposture would afford.

Observ.
P. 12.

‘ WAS it the hope of increasing his wealth?’

But he had already despised the treasures in *Egypt*; had refused to be called the son of *Pharaob*’s daughter, when he might himself have been the disposer of all the wealth, and dignity in the kingdom: and instead of these advantageous circumstances, had chosen the society of the most indigent slaves, oppressed and kept down from all means of improving their fortunes; the certain consequence of which choice must be not only the loss of all that he had, but of all hopes of acquiring more. He might have lived comfortably in *Jethro*’s family and service; but he could never expect to be rewarded for his pains by a multitude of slaves, who, when they were removed from their bondage, “ had not where “ to lay their heads.”

Observ.
P. 15.

‘ WAS it then the hope of credit or reputation? But that too lay all on the side he forsook.’ He might have established some popu-

popularity by a fuitable behaviour in his former exalted station, especially if the stories be true, which *Josephus* tells of his military exploits; for all eyes were turned upon him, and he would have flourished in the government of a renowned people: but the men, whose leader he became, were in the greatest contempt imaginable: without one advantage of parts, or learning, or any other human endowments to recommend them, or their concerns. Could the reputed son of *Pharaoh's* daughter think that he should gain any credit or reputation by putting himself at the head of a party of such vagabonds? Could one, versed in all the learning of the *Egyptians*, accounted the most wisest and the most knowing kingdom, imagine that he should raise any esteem of his improvements, by making himself the chief conductor of a sect of *Hebrews*, who were reckoned the dullest and the most superstitious people of the age? The Lord, in whom he believed, and in whose name he professed to act, was disclaimed by them, as a chimera of imagination only; and the adoration, which he wanted to pay to him, was perfectly irreconcilable to the pride of human reason, and

unpalatable to all the passions and pleasures of the world. "Who is the Lord, says *Pharaob*, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let *Israel* go."

Observ. p. 17. 'WAS it the love of power' that engaged *Moses* in this desperate attempt? 'Power over whom?' Over a parcel of despicable slaves, who, as soon as they left their servitude, must perish for want of necessary food, unless a miracle should supply them with it. Is power over such a company worth the purchasing, at the imminent hazard of losing his life in the attempt? For he might well expect, that the anger of the *Egyptians* would be more than ordinarily violent against him, who had deserted their service; killed one of *their* countrymen, in behalf of *his own*; and now tried to betray the establishment both of their Religion and Policy. But after all, what authority did *Moses* exercise over them? He made himself a slave to *them* whom he had redeemed from slavery: in all their distresses, He was distressed: nor did he ever assume to himself the liberty of injoining a single law, until he had received a special

a special command from Heaven to prescribe the conditions of it.

If power had been the darling object of his heart, he would not have shewn both his own and their dependance upon a superior Power so far, as to wish publicly, that he might be "blotted out of God's book," rather than his brethren should suffer the punishment, which their iniquities deserved; nor have prayed so often that divine vengeance might fall upon himself, if divine mercy would but spare them: much less would he have discovered his own debasement, when, without the least appearance of chagrin or disappointment, he declared openly, that for some secret fault, he would not be permitted to enter into the land of promise, but must die in the wilderness; and therefore recommends submission to his successor, for their own sakes. This is not the language of an ambitious Impostor, who naturally conceals every dependance, and every weakness: nor did he use any of those soothing arts, by which cunning men recommend themselves to the favour of those, whom they endeavour to keep in subjection to their power.

Observations on the Divine Mission

It is evident likewise, that *Moses* did not seek to aggrandize either himself or his family, from the choice of his successor; if that had been his aim, he would have conferred the government, after his decease, upon his sons, or his brother, and not upon *Joshua*, who was of another Tribe. And so far were they from concerting a scheme between themselves for this purpose, that *Moses* freely reprov'd whatever he saw amiss in *Aaron's* conduct; and *Aaron* envied *Moses* for the glory of his. In the instance of the golden calf, in particular, which shews how much they were still addicted to the *Egyptian* idolatry, and how jealous *Moses* was for the glory of the Lord God of hosts, he called *Aaron* to a severe account for his sinful indulgence of their idolatrous humour, and ordered all the ring-leaders of this apostacy from the true God to be slain, without any regard had to consanguinity or friendship. Now had he been an Impostor, he would not have ventured thus much to oppose that attachment to *Egyptian* idolatry, which the people had too much discovered since their release: he would rather, thro' fear of mutiny or defection, have twisted and warped his
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his doctrines to the increase of his power, and the particular humour of his followers. But instead of this, every rite and ceremony, that he instituted, was calculated for the glory of that God alone, whose commission he bore; for their benefit, whose conductor he was appointed, tho' many of them were very irksome and unpalatable to them: none tended to advance the credit or interest of the Impostor; and therefore it is a most strong and convincing proof, that he was not an Impostor, but acted entirely, in all he said or did, by divine Inspiration.

‘ If then it appears, upon the whole, that *Moses* had nothing to gain by this scheme, let us consider on the other hand, what he gave up, and what he had reason to fear’ *Observ.* P. 25.
from engaging in it. He gave up a reputed alliance with the king of *Egypt*’s family, which must have established his fortune and power, for his whole life: He gave up that Reputation, which he had acquired by his great valour in public, and his improvements in literature in private life: He gave up his friends, relations, and father’s house, from all whom he estranged, and banished him-

self for life : in a word, He gave up all the comforts and conveniencies of life : and let any man judge how hard a sacrifice all this was to one, who nevertheless inforced his Laws upon others by the sanctions of temporal rewards and punishments. Where there is no visible advantage proposed, and so many dangers incurred, he surely must be absolutely out of his senses, “ who will either engage in an Imposture, or being engaged persevere.”

Observ. p.
26.

‘ BUT might not the gratification of any other passion, under the authority of that Religion, he instituted, or by the means it afforded, be his inducement to undertake the establishment of it ?’ This, it will be readily confessed, has been the view of some Impostors, who, under the mask of Religion, and pretences of Revelations from God, have given the greater loose to irregular passions, and set themselves and their followers free from all restraints of Law or Morality. But the system of doctrines, which *Moses* delivered, is absolutely repugnant to every such design. The body of moral Laws, which he enacted, from God’s hand-writing, enforces

the strictest obligation to duty towards God, their neighbour, and themselves, together with the utmost abhorrence of all licentiousness, idleness, or loose behaviour, under the cloak of Religion. His rites and ceremonies of religious worship were such, as implied the baneful tendency of every sinful or disorderly action; since he shewed that it required an immediate expiation, or that without some expiation, the guilt of it would expose them to condign punishment.

‘ In all pious frauds, we may find, that they are alike beneficial both to the deceiver and the deceived; at least, they never are attended with any harm to either:’ but the practice of the Religion, which *Moses* inculcated, often drew on the observers of it many inconveniencies, as well as upon *Moses* himself: For for many years they were alike exposed to the most dreadful hardships of travel, fatigue, and banishment, in conformity to the precepts of it. ‘ And could any man, who had in his nature the least spark of Humanity, subject his fellow-creatures to so many miseries; or could one, that had in his mind the least ray of reason, expose himself

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to share them with those he deceived, in order to advance a Religion, which he knew to be false, merely for the sake of introducing an Imposture; from which he had not the least prospect of pleasure or reward? The reasonable choice, if he were at liberty to make it, would have led him to the contrary resolution: for as he had quitted *Egypt* with safety, he might, by keeping at a distance from it, preserve his life; whereas by quitting his peaceful retirement in *Jethro's* family, and returning into *Egypt* again, he laid himself open to death and destruction. Let any one, if he can, fix upon an Imposture, that was ever entered upon, or carried on by practices, so abhorrent to the first principles of our Nature.

AND if it be thus evident to every impartial inquirer, who examines the invalidity of the means, or the want of sufficient motives, which might engage *Moses* in his Ministry, that he could not be an Impostor, who said what he knew to be false with an intent to deceive, 'let us next consider (that we may pursue the proposition we set out with thro' all its parts,) whether he was an Enthusiast,
who

who by the force of an over-heated imagination imposed upon himself.' It must be confessed, that when Enthusiasm begins to gain strength, it will influence the minds and actions of men more powerfully, than either cool reason or divine revelation; and perhaps, than both together: but yet, there must be found a proper disposition of mind, as a receptacle for those sudden impulses, which pass for illumination without search, or certainty without proof.

' Now the principal ingredients, of which Enthusiasm is generally composed, are these: Obser. p. 69. great heat of temper; Melancholy; Ignorance; Credulity; and Vanity or Self-conceit.' Some may fancy, that a great warmth of temper discovered itself early in *Moses*, by his killing the *Egyptian*, without the least provocation, and afterwards by his breaking the two tables of stone in a passion, because *Aaron* had timorously complied with a strange request of the people, in setting up the golden calf. But if we examine the principles, from which both these seemingly hasty actions proceeded, we shall find them perfectly consistent with the general character, given of him,

him, that "he was the meekest man upon earth."—In the first instance, he protected injured innocence from a violent death; and in the latter, he endeavoured to preserve the glory of the *true* God inviolate, by shewing his indignation against their revolt to the *false*. In both, if we will believe the *Jewish* Doctors, he was actuated by a divine impulse, which checked an unpardonable cruelty towards one of his brethren, and an impious insult upon the authority of his God. But notwithstanding it is said, that "his anger waxed hot," upon this occasion; yet was it so remarkably tempered with his usual meekness, as immediately before and after the expression of his anger, to intercede with the Almighty for compassion and forgiveness to his offending brethren.

' Let us then see if any one of those other qualities, disposing the mind to Enthusiasm, and being characteristical of it,' were to be found in *Moses*. Melancholy, mixed with a false devotion, is of all dispositions of body or mind the most prone to Enthusiasm: but to this *Moses* does not appear to be the least inclined. ' We do not read of any gloomy penances,

penances, or extravagant mortifications' inflicted upon himself for the sin of murder in his younger days: He knew that he could justify the act to God and his conscience, and with that degree of holiness he was prudently satisfied. He did not rush into the King of *Egypt's* presence only that he might boast of being undeservedly persecuted by him: He neither ran into danger, nor avoided it, purely to make a merit of either, but as it was most consistent with the duty of his office, or most conducive to the honour of his God. He prayed indeed to be "blotted out of the book, which God had written," if he could not otherwise forgive the sin of the people, in paying adoration to the golden calf: but in this he acted only like a good Governor, who is zealously affected for the welfare of his people. It is not, as some conceive, a wish of damnation to himself, that they might be saved: but, touched with a feeling of their calamitous state, if God should either abandon or destroy them, he hopes to appease the justice, and engage the mercy of God, by this affectionate alternative, as a learned Father explains the petition, "either be thou pleased to slay me and them together,
or

or to spare them and me together." (*Paul in Epist. 21.*) This is not the enthusiastic rant of fool-hardiness or despair: it is rather a pious reliance on God's mercy to the guilty, and a religious confidence on God's justice to the innocent.

'As to Ignorance, which is another ground of Enthusiasm, *Moses* was so far from it, that he appears to have been Master' of all the learning of the *Egyptians*, who had made greater advancements in Literature, than any other nation, in that early age of the world: for thither the sages of every other nation repaired for instruction and improvement: and to shew how high their reputation was, above all others, we need no better argument, than that a sacred Historian, in after ages, could not magnify his idea of the knowledge of *Solomon* in more exalted terms, than by observing, that he even "excelled all the wisdom of *Egypt*." (*1 Kings iv. 30.*)

See Bp.
Warbur-
ton's Div.
Leg. of
Moses, B.
3. and 4.

NOR was *Moses* more subject to Credulity, than he was misled by Ignorance. His fault rather lay on the other side, in an unreasonable diffidence of the validity of his credentials

tials at the first, and some peevish remonstrances to God, when *Pharaoh* would not yield to the evidence of their validity afterwards. At the vision of the burning bush, the very sight of which, one would have thought, might have been sufficient to guard him against all the possibility of a wavering faith, he nevertheless demurs to the divine proposal, and makes many frivolous excuses, if not a flat denial to his accepting of it. He saw his rod turned into a serpent, and that serpent become a rod again: He saw his hand covered with leprosy, and instantly restored to its former cleanness; nay moreover, He had the promise of a standing power from him, who wrought all these miracles to confirm it, of converting water into blood, whenever there should be occasion to exercise it; and yet, could he not be prevailed upon immediately to undertake the business, 'till God was, in a manner, forced to obtrude it upon him. This surely was slowness of belief in the extremest degree. An enemy might suggest, that it discovers even an obstinate prejudice against these demonstrations of supernatural assistance, attending his ministry, which nothing but the
irresistible

irrefistible evidence of his own senses could have overcome. He would not have been justly chargeable with too easy, or implicit a Faith, if he had rested it upon the first voice from the bush, confirmed as it was by such a miraculous appearance: it has however effectually cut off a charge of a different nature; for as it shews, that his mind was not disposed to too credulous a reception of a Miracle, worked in proof of any new commission from Heaven; so, if it be considered in all its circumstances, it clears him, in the last place, from the imputation

OF Vanity or Self-conceit, another and a principal characteristic of an Enthusiastic turn. An over-weaning imagination will be apt to raise a man above reason: He will see, or think that he sees the divine light infused into his understanding. He will be forwardly obedient to the impulses, which he receives only from himself; and because they come from thence, he will conclude, they cannot be mistaken for fictions, since they need no other proof, for they can give no better, than their own internal evidence. This raises him into an opinion of greater familiarity

familiarity with God, than is allowed to others: He flatters himself with the persuasion of an immediate intercourse with the Deity; and thence forwards he substitutes, in the room of Reason and Revelation, the ungrounded reveries of his own brain for the most substantial foundation both of Faith and Practice.

THIS is the state of all modern Enthusiasm: but that *Moses* was perfectly free from all these extravagancies of imagination is incontestably plain from his own account of his behaviour in the present occurrence: wherein he conceals many things, (if we will believe *Josephus*, the most faithful of all the *Jewish* historians,) of which an Impostor would have vainly boasted; and discovers others, which a man of art and design would have carefully concealed. What vain-glorious man, upon hearing a voice from an Heavenly messenger, ordering him to go upon a divine embassy, would have declined the service, upon the score of his mean estate, "Who am I, that I should go unto *Pharaoh*, and that I should bring forth the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*?" Would he not have presumed

fumed, that others must be convinced of his superior authority, as well as himself; and that what had puffed him up with vanity, would strike others with awe, rather than have remonstrated further, "Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice." But the proof of his modesty rises higher still: for even after the repeated signs and promises, which were made to him, that if the people in *Egypt* did not believe one sign, they would hearken to the voice of another, in the humility of his heart, he excuses himself, as unfit to be employed upon so important an errand: "I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." And when this objection likewise is removed by the gracious assurance of his being continually assisted with power from on high, *Moses* persists in the same modest strain of diffidence and backwardness, "Send, I pray thee, by the hand of him, whom thou wilt send:" i. e. as Commentators of note have explained it, "Send a more proper person, one fitter for this employment than I am."

‘ Is this the language of Enthusiasm?’ Does not the Enthusiast greedily catch at the first symptoms of divine illumination? Does he not expect, that others should swallow every trifling chimera for absolute certainty, as readily as he has done himself? Will he discover any distrust of the validity of his credentials? It would be as difficult to persuade an Enthusiast, that others would not look upon the evidence of his mission to be irresistible, as it was to persuade *Moses*, that they would at last yield to the strength of his. So opposite are the two characters to each other, that we may as well suppose *Moses* to be a professed Infidel, as a self-conceited Enthusiast.

‘ THE power of Imagination in Enthusiastical minds is no doubt very strong:’ but it is always excited by some present reveries in the fancy, which set it on work; at least, it can never act against the present impressions of sense, or the immediate force of our natural passions. Now *Moses*, at the time of this vision, was in a foreign country, where he had secretly taken refuge from the laws of justice against murder; had luckily formed

an alliance there with *Jetbro's* family; and was now contentedly dwelling in his house, together with his wife and two children; and for his daily employment, keeping the sheep of his father-in-law. In such a situation as this, had he imagined, that he saw a vision from Heaven, commending his flight from *Egypt*, and charging him never to return thither again, it might be accounted for by the natural power of Enthusiasm, for this would concur with the fear of punishment, already imprinted upon his mind: but that he should imagine himself called by an Heavenly vision to run headlong, as it might seem, into the hands of justice; and in a manner, that would most highly provoke the executioners of it; that he should, on a sudden, imagine himself called by the same Heavenly vision, to leave a comfortable abode, where he enjoyed all the satisfaction, which quiet, friendship, and plenty could give him: This was doing violence as much to Natural Reason and Affection, as the other was running counter to natural Passion and Instinct. And both parts of the scheme are so far from being the probable result of Enthusiasm, working upon a distempered brain,

brain, that just the contrary effects must have been naturally produced by that cause. As it was undertaken, divine interposition apart, it was against probability, against sense, against passion, and against reason.

BUT perhaps it may be said, (for Infidelity, when it is hard pressed, will suggest any thing,) that this apparition was a mere phantom of *Moses's* own creating: or it might be a natural *Phosphorus*, which will shine, and even burn spontaneously, without the application of any material fire, and therefore without consuming. But besides that this vision did not happen in the dark, when alone the *Phosphorus* is visible, how will such a supposition 'account for the distinct words heard by *Moses*, and to which he made answer? How will it account for what followed upon it,' when he came to *Egypt*, 'agreeably to the sense of those words, which he heard?' Would it enable him to work those Miracles, which he did before *Pharaoh*, 'above any power of Nature to work, or of Imposture to counterfeit, or of Enthusiasm to imagine?' Even if the Infidel could give any tolerable account of the luminous appearance, or could suppose it to happen without a miracle,

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yet this is not the whole difficulty. The rod in his hand is turned into a serpent, and his hand is instantaneously covered with leprosy, and as instantaneously they are restored to their former state : could these be the effects of a *Phosphorus* too ?

No, it will be said : but might not a sudden frenzy seize upon his Imagination, which would occasion a surprize, that might supply his mind with any extravagant suggestions ? — And would such a frenzy, imagine it as wild as you please, have made *Pbaraob* and the Magicians in *Egypt*, believe that they also saw a series of miraculous acts, when they did not ? What, if *Moses*, in his frantic fits, had threatned to bring the several plagues of frogs and lice, of flies, murrain, boils and blains, of hail, fire, rain, locusts, darkness, and at last, of striking the first-born of every family with sudden death ? Would such menaces, thrown out at random, make them believe, that they suffered such extremities, if they did not ? This will suppose, more than the Infidel intended, that the Enthusiasm is equal both in the doer and sufferers ; and the same degree of it must, at the same moment, infect the whole land
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of *Egypt*, as effectually, as it had infected *Moses*: the children of *Israel* only, who were exempted from the sufferings, were free from the contagion of it. But these suppositions are too absurd to be named: Surely, 'such a series of miraculous acts, all consequential to, and dependent upon the first Revelation, must put the truth of that Revelation beyond all possibility of doubt or deceit.'

Observ.
p. 89.

AFTER their release from *Egypt* however, the *Israelites* must have been cheated, in as extraordinary a manner, by the same Enthusiastic spirit, as the *Egyptians* were before their departure. For when, by the rout, that was fixed for them, they were dangerously hemmed in on every side, by the sea in their front, impassable mountains on their flank, and the *Egyptian* army in their rear, so that there was no visible way left to escape the fury, with which their persecutors threatened them, could Enthusiasm either in *Moses*, or in the people, make them believe, that by *Moses* waving his rod, he had divided the waters of the *Red-sea*, and that they walked thro' the midst of the waves, suspended, as it were, contrary to their nature, on each side, for their passage, if they had been tra-

velling only by the sea-side all that while? The effect of infatuation was too sensibly felt by the other party, not to be distinguished from the success of this; "for the *Egyptians*, assaying to do the like, were drowned."

I NEED not recount every miracle, that *Moses* wrought during their long and tedious journey thro' the wilderness. Let infidelity, if it can, account for the daily supply of bread, by the fall of Manna, excepting, as *Moses* foretold, on the Sabbath, and the double portion on the preceding day, to suffice for both days; or, for the seasonable refreshment of water from the stony rock, only by a stroke of the rod, upon the principle of an Enthusiastic delusion? Could all the people believe, by any power of *Moses's*, or of their own imaginations, that when they were ready to perish, thro' hunger and thirst, they were immediately satisfied with plenty both of meat and drink, in a place that could naturally furnish them with neither, if their senses had not really informed them, that they did truly eat and drink? Such a miracle, as this, can no more be ascribed to Enthusiasm, than to Imposture. Had they known, and they could not but know, that they were starving
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for want, whilst *Moses* endeavoured to persuade them, that they were blessed with abundance, they must have regarded their Leader, as a man out of his senses, instead of revering him as the ambassador of God.

SUPPOSE that Enthusiasm could make a man think within himself, that he was able by a stroke to fetch water out of a stony rock, would that conceit of his make others think, that they drunk of that water, and that their thirst, of which they were ready to die, was quenched by it, so that they had no reason to complain more of the want of it? And if they did not think thus, and undeceived they must be upon the trial, 'how could he persist in such an opinion,' against remonstrances, 'or upon his persisting, escape being deserted as a madman,' rather than be followed, as a guide? But it would have been the greatest of all miracles to manage, that such a madness should seize upon the senses of so many at once, and exactly in the same manner, as *Moses* was conducting thro' the perils of a desolate wilderness. 'Indeed, they who would impute to Imagination effects such as those, which *Moses* imputes to the power of God,' attending his mission, 'must ascribe

to

Observ.
P. 96.

to Imagination the same Omnipotence, which he ascribes to God.'

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LET us next inquire, as was proposed, whether *Moses* 'was deceived in this affair by the fraud of others, and whether all that he said of himself can be imputed to the power of that deceit.' But who should contrive the fraud, or if they had conceived such a thought, would be able to execute it? The only persons, that could be concerned in such a plot, were the *Israelites*, or the *Egyptians*, or *Pharaoh*, or *Jethro*: but neither the *Israelites*, nor the *Egyptians*, nor *Pharaoh* could possibly know where *Moses* was at that time; and *Jethro*, we may be sure, would rather have counter-acted the scheme, than have promoted it. But suppose that any, or all of them together, had laid the several parts of their design so artfully, that it was actually ripe for the execution, before it could be discovered, yet could they also produce a bush in flames, in the day-time, when the senses are open, and the bush itself not be consumed? could they make *Moses* hear words, delivered out of that bush, to which he gave and received answers, relating to an important errand, which he refused to go upon

upon at first, but dare not decline in the end? Could they convert his rod into a serpent, and cover his hand with leprosy, and then re-convert the serpent into a rod, and restore his hand from its noisome state, by a word, and yet he be deceived, in both, by false appearances? But above all, could the fraud of others produce those Miracles, acknowledged to be such by his opponents, subsequent to his mission, in *Egypt*, and in the wilderness, ‘in which he was not passive, but active, which he did himself, and to which he appeals,’ as the credentials of his divine authority? If the absurdity of these suppositions are too glaring to be dwelt upon; and neither wilful Imposture, nor vain Enthusiasm, nor the artful fraud of others will help us, in the least, to find a natural cause adequate to these known effects, then does it follow incontestably, ‘that what *Moses* related to have been the motive of his undertaking his commission, and to have happened in consequence of it, did all really happen, and therefore *the Religion, he established, is a Divine Revelation.*’

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WE might well rest the whole argument upon these premisses, and this conclusion, fairly

fairly drawn from them. But Sceptics will suggest difficulties in the plainest matters ; and no marvel, if the most ancient History we have, and that wrote in the most concise manner, should not have escaped their censures. If they are forced to allow, that *Moses* was really sent into *Egypt*, with a commission from Heaven, they will not acquit the wisdom and veracity of God, who could make choice of a murderer to execute his greatest purposes ; and could put his Ambassador upon prevaricating with *Pharaoh*, by directing him to demand a release for only three days journey into the wilderness, upon a pretence of Religion, when his real design was, that the *Israelites* should never return again. Or, if they would not impeach God's wisdom and veracity, they will question the truth of *Moses* being sent at all upon that errand, and then they throw the blame upon him, as an inconsistent and unfaithful Historian, who has not only invented a false story to amuse the world, but has put the several parts of the story together very confusedly. For sometimes they object, that at the end of one chapter *Moses* tells *Pharaoh*, that " he will see his face no more ;" and yet, at the beginning of the next, he is sent
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to him again : at other times, they are dissatisfied with the sign, that *Moses*, in his account, makes God to give him, to confirm his own faith, viz. that he should see that very people, who were now slaves in *Egypt*, set free, and “ worshipping him on that Mountain ;” which, say they, referred him to an event posterior to his mission, and therefore could not be a proper token beforehand of the validity of it. Or, if they cannot make *Moses*’s account, when it is consider’d, inconsistent with itself, they will try to shew its disagreement with the account of others : for when *St. Stephen* is reciting the History of *Israel*, in *Acts*, chap. vii. he observes of *Moses* in particular, ver. 25. that “ when he smote the *Egyptian*,” in behalf of one of his injured brethren, “ he supposed that they would have understood,” that he acted herein by a divine impulse, and, “ how that God by his hand would deliver them, but they understood not :” And how was it to be expected, say these men, that they should understand this, when *Moses* himself, by his own history, does not seem to have understood it himself ? For when God declares to him, at the bush, which was forty years after the other event ; his purpose of
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appointing him to be their deliverer, he excuses himself in such a manner, as shews some surprize at the divine appointment, “ And *Moses* said unto God, who am I, that I should go unto *Pharaoh*, and that I should bring forth the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt* ?” (*Exod.* iii. 11.) These several difficulties have been urged against this part of the sacred History, and it is our concern to remove them.

As to the first objection, that God should make choice of a poor murderer to execute his greatest purposes, it boldly prescribes to infinite power, the necessary instrumentality of such second causes, as our finite understandings direct us to chuse for the accomplishment of our narrow designs : whereas all nature is at his command, and the sufficiency or insufficiency of the instruments that he uses, will make no difference. If *Moses* had killed the *Egyptian*, merely upon a principle of revenge, without the least notice of a divine impulse, it must be confessed, that such an action was culpable : but he might not be e’er the more disqualified for a divine Ambassador, upon that account, nor the less sincere and faithful in the discharge of his commission.

mission. Perhaps the same zeal, that had already exerted itself in the defence of one of his brethren; might be requisite to animate their deliverer in the opposition, he would meet with from their Tyrant: This will shew him to be the properest agent, that could have been pitched upon for the purpose; and this preliminary trial of his courage would make him the more resolute in a second attempt of proving it.

BUT if we should suppose, that he had abused this natural courage in the grossest manner: yet what culpable defect would this immediately draw after it, when he was employed in a new embassy, openly confirmed by the seal of Heaven? Was *St. Paul* the less zealous Apostle in the christian faith after his conversion, because he had most zealously persecuted the church of Christ before it? This parallel will add the greater strength to the argument, inasmuch as it will shew, that *Moses* might have been "a chosen vessel of God," the proper executioner of his will, even if he had laid violent hands on one of his own brethren, "who were in the true faith" instead of an *Egyptian*, who was a "stranger to the promises:" just as *St. Paul*,
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by the influence of such a vision, became a steady protector of that set of men, of whom he had been, upon principle, a bitter persecutor *. To record such an action of himself is a proof of his being a faithful Historian ; but to be guilty of it, is no objection against his being appointed to a prophetic office.

IN the execution of this however, He is represented in another reproachful light, as prevaricating with *Pharaoh*, even by God's own command, who directed him to demand a release of the *Israelites* for only three days journey into the wilderness, upon a pretence of religious worship, when his real design was, that they should never return again. But will these objectors assert, that God was obliged by any laws of equity to reveal his *whole* intention to *Pharaoh*, as if one man were

* I am aware, that an Infidel will try to disarm me of the use of this parallel, by objecting as much against the truth of *St. Paul's* conversion, as against the evidence of *Moses's* divine mission : but as I profess to write upon the plan of the author of the *Observations*, &c. and therefore must look upon the truth of *St. Paul's* conversion to be established by him beyond all doubt, I may be allowed to draw an illustration from an instance, about which my very design supposes that the Infidel must have received conviction : for the validity of all my own reasoning rests upon the strength of that author's arguments.

were treating upon terms with another? And if *Moses* acted according to his instructions, it is sufficient to acquit *him*. If *Pharaoh* could deny such a request as this, it would become a flagrant proof, that his Tyranny over the poor slaves was the more intollerable, and consequently, that the vengeance of Heaven, which attended it, was the more just. There is no imputation of disingenuity lying against *Moses* for obeying such orders, nor any fallacy chargeable upon God for giving them. *Pharaoh* might (and it should seem by his obstinate refusal that he did) suspect what was the Truth: but he was not intitled to a formal declaration of the whole; nor, if he had been told it, justifiable, by all the laws of hospitality, for not complying with it: for the *Israelites* had fulfilled the time of bondage, which they had bound themselves to serve; and therefore their dismissal, upon their request, was rather a debt of justice, than an act of Grace.

Vid. Rivet. & Junium. in Exod. iii. 18.

It is no wonder, if they, who read the Scriptures only to find fault with them, should catch at the glimpse of an inconsistency, occasioned by a transposition, that will unavoidably happen, when a History passes thro'

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many ages, and in every age, thro' the hands of numberless transcribers and translators. In *Exod.* x. 28, 29. *Pharaoh* threatens *Moses* with immediate death, if he ventured into his presence again; and *Moses*, not intimidated by the threatening, but knowing the will of God, who had sent him, assures him, that "he should see his face again no more." But in the 11th chapter, ver. 4. *Moses* appears before *Pharaoh* once more, with the dreadful news of the last and greatest plague that Heaven would inflict, the destruction of their first-born: and after this severe denunciation, says the context, ver. 8. "He went out from *Pharaoh* in a great anger;" or, left him so: for altho' Bp. *Patrick* refers these last words to *Moses*, as if he were provoked at *Pharaoh's* insensibility, yet in truth, they seem to be more naturally applicable to *Pharaoh*, who would probably, as he had before, disdain, and therefore resent such a threatening: and then follows appositely (for they, i. e. *Moses* and *Aaron*, had been driven from *Pharaoh's* presence once before, ch. x. 11.) the menace of an angry Monarch, who regarded neither God nor Man; "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face, thou shalt die."

Moses

Moses knew that his commission of inflicting plagues would be exhausted in this; (ch. xi. 1.) and therefore he returns him this resolute answer, "Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more:" Nor does it appear, that he ever went to *Pbaraob* after this; for the King only sent his officers to him, (instead of sending for him, as at other times,) to desire him and his brethren to be gone.—Remove then the 28th and 29th verses of the 10th chapter to their proper place in the 8th verse of the 11th chapter, and every difficulty or seeming inconsistency will be removed too: for the whole context will, with the greatest propriety, run thus: chap. xi. ver. 8. "After that I will go out." Ver. 9. "And *Pbaraob* said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more."—Ver. 10. "And *Moses* said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more. And he went out from *Pbaraob* (or left him) in a great anger." Ver. 11. "And the Lord said unto *Moses*, *Pbaraob* shall not hearken unto you," &c. The 10th chapter will end very well with the 27th verse, and the beginning of the next chapter will be free from any inconsistency with it.

It must be confessed, that an event, subsequent to the granting of a commission, cannot be a present token of the validity of it; nor a sign of the accomplishment of a present promise: This has thrown the difficulty upon what God promises to *Moses*, as an encouragement to him to undertake what he commands: "I will certainly be with thee: and this shall be a Token to thee, that I have sent thee; when thou hast brought forth the people out of *Egypt*, ye shall serve God upon this mountain, (*Exod.* iii. 12.) *Junius*, after some of the *Jewish* Doctors, has pointed the verse so, as to take away this difficulty, by referring the former part of it to the vision of the flaming bush; and the latter clause to the design and end of the people's deliverance; which will lead us to the following explanation of the whole. When *Moses* declines the commission, with that humble excuse, verse 11. "Who am I that I should go unto *Pharaoh*, and that I should bring forth the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*?" God encourages him with the assurance of his immediate protection, "certainly I will be with thee:" and to raise his dependance upon such an assurance, he adds, "this is a Token unto thee, that I have sent thee:"

thee :” this miraculous vision may convince you, that none but the God of nature could, after this manner, over-rule the powers of nature ; and that therefore He, who gives you this commission, is able to support you in the execution of it. After which follows the proper memorial, which they ought to observe upon such a happy release ; “ When thou hast brought forth the people out of *Egypt*, ye shall serve God upon this mountain :” just as the paschal lamb is afterwards enjoined to be sacrificed for a standing memorial of the blessing of their deliverance, (*Exod. xii. 17.* “ And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread ; for in the self-same day have I brought your armies out of the land of *Egypt* ; therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever ;”) when as yet they had not received *Pharaoh’s* orders to depart. It is further observable, that the Original leaves room for this easy alteration ; since the words in our translation, *shall be*, are interpolated, and not to be found in the *Hebrew* text ; so that it will admit of a present, as well as a future reference.

BUT the excuse, which *Moses* makes for not accepting of the commission, assigned to him,

has given rise to another objection against the accounts of his behaviour before it. For when *St. Stephen*, who was a *Jew*, is reciting the History of *Israel*, (in *Acts* vii.) He observes of *Moses* in particular, (ver. 25.) that when he smote the *Egyptian*, in behalf of one of his injured brethren, "He supposed, that they would have understood, how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not:" And how should they, when it is plain from his own History, that *Moses* did not understand it himself? for when God declares to him his purpose of appointing him to be their deliverer, he excuses himself, in such a manner as shews some surprize at the divine appointment: "And *Moses* said unto God, who am I that I should go unto *Pharaoh*, and that I should bring forth the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*." *Exod.* iii. 11.

BUT his persuasion at one time, and his excuse at another, will be easily reconcileable to each other, if we will make the necessary allowances for the different workings of the human passions at the different parts of our lives. When *Moses* killed the *Egyptian*, he was in the full vigour and spirit of youth; elated with the glory of some military exploits; with an
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established interest at the *Egyptian* court; and a plentiful fortune to support it. These circumstances, and probably actuated by a secret impulse, might convince him, at that time, that God designed him for the greater purposes of his Providence, which, he knew, were promised to the posterities of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; and any conviction, once wrought in a man's own mind, quickly persuades him, that the like conviction has taken place in the minds of others; especially, if the benefit is theirs, tho' the glory be his. Had the same proposal for rescuing his brethren been made to him at this period of his life, it is most likely, that he would have engaged in it without the least reluctance: but, forty years after this, he was in the decline of life: Age had made him more cool and inactive: the loss of all his interest, which he renounced, when he quitted the court, had quashed every aspiring thought; he was now fixed in an obscure state of living, to which time had reconciled his mind, and render'd him unfit for any public employment, that must draw him out of it. No wonder, that after such a distance of time, he should lay aside the thoughts, which he had pleasingly entertained, of becoming the deliverer of his brethren;

and that he should wish to be excused, if he could, from an undertaking, which would at once break in upon his settled scheme of retirement, and must necessarily involve him in such an application to business, of various kinds, as would prove irksome to the natural timidity and infirmities of old age. "Who am I," now a poor despised shepherd, "that I should go unto *Pharaoh*," "and that I," who formerly abandoned the court of *Egypt*, should recover interest enough to "bring forth the children of *Israel*," who have once rejected my services, from thence?—"Without were fightings; within were fears." (2 Cor. vii. 5.)

It is amazing to observe, notwithstanding this, with how much intrepidity on *Moses's* part, and against how much obstinacy, mixed with forbearance, on *Pharaoh's*, this whole affair was conducted. At their first interview, *Moses* only preferred his petition, without working any of his miracles, or even discovering that he had the power of working them; and yet the cruel Tyrant proceeded no further against him, than just to reprimand him for interrupting the people in their work, tho' he suspected, that they had a design of revolting

volting from his service, and looked upon this, as a seditious attempt towards making their escape. The king indeed profanely questioned the existence of their God, but his hands were restrained, in the mean while, by God's almighty power, and his spirit governed by God's unsearchable wisdom. *Moses* had received no particular injunction to abstain from shewing his wonders at the first; and therefore, in order to gain the king's attention, or avert his resentment, it was natural to suppose, that he would be forward to shew them: but neither did the one require a sign, nor was the other prompted to give it, till the divine Ambassador had gained a second admittance into the Royal presence.

MOSES has faithfully recorded how much he was discouraged at the first repulse, and that he endeavoured again to decline the office, in which he had succeeded no better: not considering, that even to come off unpunished from such a perverse Tyrant, before he had manifested the validity of his credentials, was itself a greater degree of success, than any embassy of this kind, devoid of supernatural assistance, could have secured to its Minister. Human foresight cannot always understand

derstand, that "hope deferred," tho' it may for the present "make the heart sick," is oftentimes attended with such unexpected means of accomplishing every desire, beyond the utmost extent of human power, that the greater opposition itself, under God's direction, will gain the greater victory; and the more open is the defiance of authority, the more glorious is the triumph over it. These were the effects of *Moses's* contests with the obstinacy of *Pharaoh*, and the art of the Magicians: Had the one proved more tractable, or had not the others been set up in competition with the prophet of the true God, his commission would not have appeared so eminently divine, nor his miracles so transcendently glorious.

WHEN *Moses* turned his rod into a Serpent, and the Magicians by the help of their enchantments shewed themselves able to do the like, *Pharaoh* might be so far excusable in not yielding to this evidence he gave of a divine power, inasmuch as human artifice seemed to be equal to it. But when he saw the remarkable event of *Aaron's* rod swallowing up their rods, this manifested to him a superiority of assistance, which was heightened the more

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convincingly, the more the Sorcerers were allowed to imitate him.—So again in the other instances; the Magicians could turn the waters into blood, and produce the frogs upon the land of *Egypt*, as *Moses* did; but they could neither restore the waters, nor remove the frogs. In this, *Moses* displayed a divine power full as much, as in the infliction: and to convince *Pharaoh* of this, if any thing could have convinced him, He not only removed the several plagues at his desire, but that it might not be ascribed to magic skill, or planetary influence, he gives him leave to fix his own time, and every thing was done precisely at the time appointed, “that thou mayest know (says *Moses* to him) that there is none like unto the Lord our God,”

UPON *Pharaoh's* petition, every plague, excepting the last, is successively removed: but as soon as they are removed, his perverseness of temper returned. The scriptures have accounted for this in a manner, which, as some think, will take off the blame from *Pharaoh*; for they tell us, that “the Lord hardened his heart.” But why it is so translated, as Bp. *Patrick* observes, is difficult to conceive, since the very same *Hebrew* phrase

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is translated in chap. vii. 22. by, “*Pbaraob’s* heart was hardned; and the Vulgate, *Chaldee* and LXX render it agreeably to this sense, “that his heart waxed stubborn; and in the 14th verse of the same chapter, God interprets BeCapntai. his own meaning, “*Pbaraob’s* heart is heavy;” LXX. intimating, that it all proceeded from his own settled resolution, which no suffering could hitherto mollify into compliance. By God’s permission, not by his appointment, we daily see instances of the like stubbornness of heart, which we would willingly excuse by alledging, “that it was thro’ the Lord that we fell away.” In our distresses we promise and vow to reform the sins, which may have brought them upon us; but as soon as we are relieved, we act, as if we thought ourselves discharged from our late engagements, and might take our fill again of that potion, which we know will turn to “the poison of asps” within us.

THE peculiar propriety of the several miracles, which *Moses* was commissioned to work, is as remarkable, as the manner, in which they were done. There is a distinguishing significancy in his first miracle, which had been made the seal of his appointment by Heaven;

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viz. the transformation of his dead rod into a living serpent. Commentators have tried to find out many mystical references in this, to the dejected and flourishing condition of the *Israelites*, or to the oppression and final overthrow of the *Egyptians*: but our learned Dr. *Lightfoot* has with great judgment concluded, from its being called *Tannin* in *Exod.* vii. 10. that this serpent (which, if it were of the ordinary kind, would have been named *Nachash*) was in reality a Crocodile; a beast, to which the *Egyptians* paid divine adoration, and unto whose devouring jaws the *Hebrew* infants had been sacrificed, when they were cast into the river *Nile*: so that the appearance of such a miracle would intimate to the *Egyptians*, as well as to the *Israelites*, that *Moses* was able even to produce one of their Gods, and destroy it again; and moreover, that the true God would defeat their purposes, and punish them for that inhumanity, which they had cruelly shewn to the innocent babes.

See his
Works.
Vol. I.
p. 702.

ANALOGOUS to this interpretation, which is also made the more probable by it, is the first plague, that was inflicted upon the *Egyptians*, the conversion of the waters of the river into blood: for they held the river
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Nile, which by its overflowing enriched their land, and made it fruitful, in the highest honour : so that when they saw the beneficial influence of their supreme Deity judicially destroyed, it might be sufficient to convince them, that the God of *Moses* was above their God. Add to this, what *Theodoret* remarks, that as the sin of the *Egyptians* lay in drowning the *Hebrew* children in the river, so God now punishes them for it, in kind, by forcing them to drink unwholesome blood from the same channel, where they had stained the wholesome waters with the blood of the innocent.—‘ The waters, in which the children’s blood had been shed, says Dr. *Lightfoot*, are turned into blood.’

It would be tedious to dwell upon the just propriety of every miracle that *Moses* wrought among the *Egyptians*, before *Pharaoh* could be prevailed upon to release the captives : but it is evident from what has been already said, that *Moses* was truly delegated by the God of nature to work them ; otherwise he could not have shewn so uncontroulable a command over all the powers of nature, as to make them subservient to every purpose, which might convince the haughty Monarch,

that his own, and his peoples sins were specified in their punishments; and consequently, that they rebelled against a God, who was able, when he pleased, to vindicate the honour, due unto his name.

His miracles were of that nature, and performed in such a manner, as that they could not be either feigned or counterfeit: The *Egyptians* could not but know, whether they saw and felt those unusual calamities, or not; or, that if they did feel them, they were brought and removed by a word only. The *Israelites* too could not but know, whether they were free from the several miseries, which others suffered, or not; or, if they were, that their God alone, who had promised to protect them, had restrained the natural course of such evils, within such limits. Both nations would be inquisitive into the nature of the miracles, since both were equally concerned in the effects of them. When the children of *Israel* were rescued from the house of bondage, they might hope, that their difficulties were all at an end: but here again was another proper scene of action for a prophet, who was endued with power from on high to display it. The *Egyptians* would

would scarcely have attempted to pursue the *Israelites* with such a determined vengeance, if they had known, that they could possibly have found a passage thro' the *Red-sea*: they knew from the course of the country, that there was no escaping from them by land: and they knew the depth of the sea, that they must either be drowned or slain: in this extremity, natural causes could avail them nothing: the ebbing and flowing of the sea could not have opened a proper path to them; for then they would have had abundance of water on one hand, whilst there was nothing on the other, to confine them: and tho' they might have travelled to some distance by the side of it; yet either the sea or their pursuers must have overpowered them at the last. For what could the *Israelites* have done against the *Egyptians*; worn out, as they were, with hard bondage; wearied with continual marching; destitute of arms; strangers to war; with every disadvantage of situation to engage them? But when they both saw the waters divide themselves, and, contrary to their nature, stand confined without any visible boundaries to stop their "proud waves;" this discovered the arm of the Lord Almighty, "who alone," in the words of his
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own challenge to *Job*, when he asserts his supremacy, "shut up the sea with doors, when "it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the "womb; who brake up for it his decreed "place, and set bars and doors, and said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further."

MOSES was the first, that we read of, who was commissioned to work miracles: all the Patriarchs who lived before him, however graciously assured of the protection of God, did yet only see visions, or dream dreams to convince them of his immediate favour and presence. From this circumstance *Maimonides* concludes, 'that the prophetic spirit, which rested upon *Moses*, was far more excellent, than that, which had been upon any before his time:' and if we will believe the Scriptures, he was more excellent, in this respect, than any that followed him under the *Jewish* dispensation for some time at least: for the author of *Deut. xxxiv. 10.* has put an evident difference of prophetic illumination between *Moses* and the rest of the prophets: "and there arose not a prophet since in *Israel* like unto *Moses*, whom the Lord knew face to face." Whoever added these words to the book of *Deuteronomy*, they were at least

Maimon.
More Ne-
voch. P. 2.
c. 35.

See Bp.
Sherlock's
Use and
Intent of
Prophecy.
Disc. 6.

See Smith's
select Dis-
courses. p.
179, and
262.

added in the time of *Joshua*: He then did not arrive at this perfection in prophecy; and if not *Joshua*, much less did his successors in the legal administration, who were not honoured with so great an employment under God, as he was. Hence the later *Jews* have stiled the highest degree of Inspiration, that they could conceive, *gradus Mosaicus*: wherein the impressions of things are made upon the understanding itself, without the intervention of the imaginative faculty, as it is called; or that, wherein God speaks, as it were, face to face: importing the clearness and evidence of the intellectual light, without the mediation of any Angelical power. It was necessary, that this should be transcendently glorious, since it was to be the basis of all future prophecy: for all the prophets aim chiefly at that, to establish and confirm the practice of what the Law of *Moses* had enacted.

IN this part of Scripture, as in many others, God is represented, as if he were surrounded with the senses and affections of a Man: he “*sees* the affliction of his people:” he “*bears* their cry;” and he “*comes down* to deliver them.” Divine Truth becomes herein, as it were

were, incarnate: it descends from the height of Divinity to the meanness of Human conceptions; that it may converse the more freely with us, and infuse its own nature into ours. If God should always speak to us in the language of Eternity, who could understand him, or interpret his meaning? or, if he had used such abstract terms, as are intelligible to men of abstract reasoning only, how would the more illiterate sort have been able to comprehend them? But Truth, when it comes into the world, condescends to learn our language, and “becomes all things to all men,” as the Apostle of Truth declares he did, for their good.

MAIMONIDES observes, that corporeal properties are frequently attributed to God in the Scriptures, because the bulk of mankind do not naturally apprehend the essence of any thing, but by a corporeal medium: but such of them as sound imperfection in vulgar ears, as eating, and drinking, and the like, these, says he, the Scriptures no where attribute to him. Had they been writ in a stile, which only sagacious minds could have understood, how few are there, that would have been instructed by them in the true knowledge of God? but the invisible things are represented by

More Ne-
voch. P. 1,
c. 26.

by "the things, which are seen," in order to bring them down to the apprehensions of those, who would otherwise have been drawing to the conclusion of their days, (as *Maimonides* again remarks) before they could have known, whether there be a God or not.

THE Infidel, who rejects all Revelation, may question every degree of evidence, that another can produce, to satisfy himself or others, that he is sent from God: but when such things are foretold, as none but infinite

See Bp.
Williams's
Sermons at
Boyle's
Lectures.
Serm. I.

wisdom could know; and such things are done, as none but infinite power could do; these are as incontestible proofs of a divine mission, as the creation of the world is of a divine agency.

This will make it difficult for us to distinguish much between the Deist and the Atheist: for the Atheist "says in his heart, there is no God," and the Deist discards every evidence, which proves that "he is."

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THE END.